



Care for Your Feet

By Wendy Marks
April 2017



Although I am not an expert regarding feet, I have had a pair for quite a long time, and they haven't always been the happiest part of my body. In fact, when I travel, most of my suitcase is often taken up by shoes. I find it very difficult, especially when walking around all day, to wear the same shoes two days in a row. I'd much rather wear the same outfit several times than torture my tootsies.

I never really wondered if this was normal. I believed that I just had sensitive feet. I do have a condition called Morton's toe (a second toe that is longer than the others) that can cause foot, leg and hip problems, so I find the task of acquiring shoes to be quite a process. (My mother often said that my longer toe was just a sign of aristocratic breeding-haha. Alas, we are of solid peasant stock.)

I also have fallen arches, which I thought for many years were the same as flat feet. They are not. Flat feet is actually a condition where your bone sits on the ground. Fallen arches just mean that you have an inadequate arch. For many years I tried to wear high heels, if only for an occasional fancy event. I believed if I tried hard enough, I could learn to walk in them. My cousin clued me in on this- she also has fallen arches. She told me that in high heels, there is nothing to grab onto the arch, and therefore we were basically walking on tip toes all evening and that's why it hurt so much. I gave all of my high heels away.

Care for our feet is essential to everything we do in our life. If your feet hurt, you can't walk, exercise, dance or even stand for a long time. If you neglect your feet, it can lead to unnecessary pain and other foot problems. And unfortunately, the longer we ignore any problems we have with our feet the worse things get.

Let's cover the basics:

Keep your feet clean and dry

Healthy feet start with good hygiene. Make sure to clean your feet with soap and water when you bathe. Afterward, dry them well -- fungus thrives in moist places. Anyone who has been to public bathing areas such as swimming pools and gyms knows that it's quite easy, even wearing flip-flops, to catch athlete's foot. Athlete's foot is very contagious and can be quite uncomfortable. So dry your feet well, even between those toes. Your chances of getting an infection are reduced significantly by having dry feet.

Don't ignore your feet

Weekly, take a good look at the toenails for warping and discoloration, and at the skin for cracks, breaks, or tears. Try to be conscious of any changes in color on your feet, or calluses that appear to be growing larger. If you have diabetes, you should inspect your feet daily, as woes of the feet tend to progress more rapidly when you have higher blood sugar levels, and situations can escalate quickly. If you are diabetic it is better to get your toenails clipped by a podiatrist or similar professional; this will significantly cut your risk of infection. This is almost always covered by your insurance if you are diabetic.

If you do cut your own nails, be sure to cut them properly. Invest in a good pair of nail clippers. They should be made out of heavy metal and easily sterilized, either with hot water or alcohol. Avoid trimming too close to the skin, or drastically rounding the corners of the nails, which can cause painful ingrown toenails.

A word to the wise: even if you are not diabetic, it is important to be very selective about where you get your nails done. Many people have come into my office with a very difficult to cure nail fungus caught in the nail salon.

Keep your feet dry (part 2)

Your feet have lots of sweat glands: 250,000 in each foot! Perspiration creates the perfect environment for bacteria and fungus. Natural fabric socks and even cornstarch can help keep your feet dry. Additionally, it's important to let your feet breathe. Leather or mesh footwear are good choices; synthetics can be less breathable. If your feet feel slippery or sweaty quickly in a particular pair of shoes, I would consider not wearing them.

Ah, vanity....

As a victim of Bad Shoe Choice many times myself, I think it's best to go with comfort when shopping for shoes. A friend of mine, who had been a professional buyer for a chain of shoe stores, told me that when you try on shoes, they should feel good instantly. According to her, if they're not comfortable as soon as you put them on, they never will be. This thought never occurred to me; I had bought into the "break them in" theory. I would be thousands of dollars richer now had I known that from the beginning.

Try to shop for shoes at the end of the day when your feet are at their puffiest and most tired; that way, you will better assess how comfortable they are. Also, try to wear the same type of socks or hosiery you'll be wearing with the shoes. Choose a broad, rounded shoe with plenty of room for your toes to wiggle. Even with dress shoes, remember that

they need to be comfortable as well as stylish. Stay away from high heels. I saw an x-ray in a doctor's office of what a woman's foot looks like in high heels. It showed how the bones of the ankle are distorted to give that beautiful sexy look. I'm not saying it cured me of the desire, but it sure did make me stop and think.

It is important for many people to adapt their shoes. Chiropractors make comfortable, soft orthotics that correct many foot and leg problems by keeping your ankles and feet in alignment. Know when to put up the flag. If problems persist, it is important to see a doctor. If we can't stand up and walk on our feet, pretty much everything else becomes miserable.

So let's take care of our feet and think of how happy we will be when they function for us and take us everywhere we want to go- whether it is around the block, or around the world.

Namaste,

Wendy

